What to do? How to act? Who to be?
A study of self-identity and transition for Samoan secondary school students

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BACKGROUND

• Youth bulge.
• School to work transition ‘bottleneck’.
• Education and labour are the MAJOR issues for youth.
• Social, economic, and political instability related to poverty of opportunity.
• Lack of youth participation in the issues of concern to them.
• A greater understanding of self-identity construction during youth required.
Research Aim:

1. To explore how secondary school students in Samoa construct their self-identity prior to post-secondary transition; and

2. To understand the perceived impact of this on their lived experiences and progress towards sustainable livelihoods.
METHOD

• A two stage multi-method approach to data collection

• Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997)
  – Adapted for youth participants in Samoa

• Semi-structured interviews
  – Acquiring the narrative behind the photo’s

THE PROCESS...

- **Site selection**
  - Gatekeeper access
  - 3 Schools (public, private, and mission)
  - Rural/urban
- **Youth recruitment and demographics**
  - Introductory presentation
  - Random purposive sampling
  - Consent
  - 23 Participants (year 12)
Samoan life
Climbing the tree as a metaphor for success
Future work role
Bonding with father
Motivation to succeed and do something different
A source of income for the family
Shelter Accomplishment
“...the tree has got too much branches. On reflecting on myself, I don't want to be a tree that has too much branches, going there, saying this, saying that, going too many places, you don't know your aim, and I still aim to be a doctor. ...I stayed home to take care of my granddad. ...He got his shoulder banged too much. I had to massage it for him when I was small. ...he said your hands are like the hands of a doctor, so he wants me to be a doctor. I was good in science, I was always good in science. I am proud of myself. I thank god when I think about the person I am, I am a good person and don't want to be like that tree you know, today I study science, tomorrow I study ...commerce, next day I study art, ...but if I am stable, this means I have roots. I have a success in life I will become what I want to be.”

Participant M1 – Photo 10
CONTEXTUAL DOMAINS OF IDENTITY FORMATION

- Self-Identity
- Culture & Society
- School & Work Environments
- Peers
- Family
- Fenua – Land, Roots
Strengths of Photovoice...

• An excellent means to initiate dialogue
• Ownership of the process and outcomes
• Empowering process
• Visual learning and expression
• Depth of information
Weaknesses of Photovoice...

- Qualitative focus
- Can be costly
- Requires efficient coordination of participants
QUESTIONS?